

PROGRESSIONS:
PEER-LED TEAM LEARNING



UMaine Mathematics Education Group
Department of Mathematics and Statistics



Workshop 7: Optimization

Dogs Know Calculus?!



References:

Some parts of this workshop are reproduced with the permission of the Mathematical Association of America and all rights are reserved. Tim Penning's Article First Appeared in:

Pennings, T.J. 2003. Do dogs know calculus? *College Mathematics Journal* 34(May):178-182. Available at: <http://www.maa.org/features/elvisdog.pdf>.

Peterson, Ivars, 2003, A Dog, a Ball, and Calculus, *Science News*, 24(June 14)

Available at

<http://sciencenews.org/20030614/mathtrek.asp> or
<http://www.maa.org/mathland/mathtrek%5F06%5F09%5F03.html>

In his article, "Do Dogs Know Calculus?", Tim Pennings relates how his dog, Elvis, whose running speed differs from his swimming speed, consistently enters the water at the location that minimizes the time it takes him to retrieve a ball thrown into the water from the shore. In today's workshop, we will first attempt to demonstrate that we, too, could determine that optimum location to enter the water. Second, using the data that Tim Pennings supplies, we will try to verify that Elvis really does know Calculus.

The Problem:

Elvis and Tim are standing on the shore, at point A, and Tim throws the ball into the water, to point B. Elvis runs down the shore to point D, and jumps into the water. He swims to point B, and retrieves the ball. We wish to determine the location of point D that results in the minimum time for Elvis to reach the ball.

3. If Elvis runs a lot faster than he swims, at what point should he enter the water?

4. If Elvis runs twice as fast as he swims, at approximately what point should he enter the water?

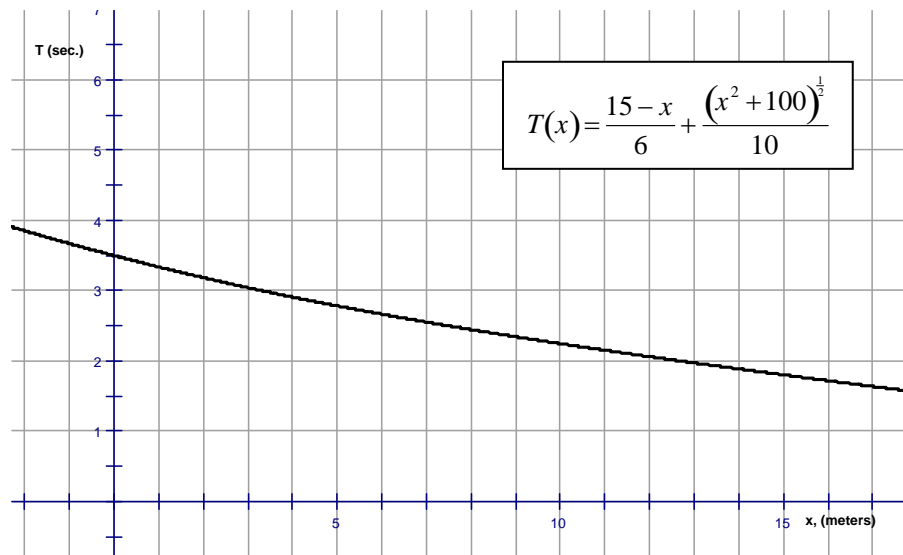
For Questions 5, think generally about the calculus of any function, not specifically about this problem.

5. Consider an arbitrary, continuous function, $T(x)$, defined on the closed interval $[a,b]$. Describe how you would attempt to find the value or values of x where T has an absolute minimum.

For the following four scenarios, we look at fixed values r and s making T a function of x alone.

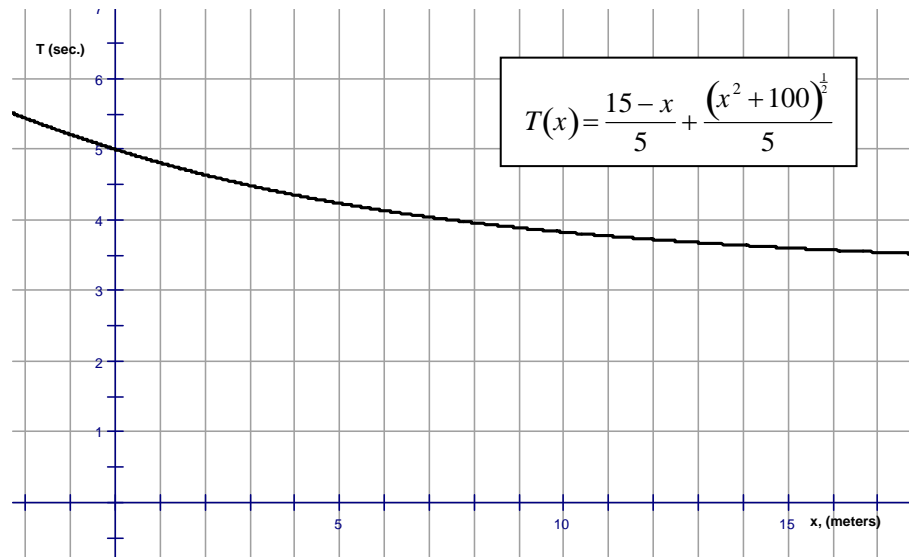
6. What is the domain of $T(x)$?

The graph of $T(x)$ is shown for the specific case when Elvis' Running Speed is 6.0 meters per second, and his swimming speed is 10.0 meters per second.



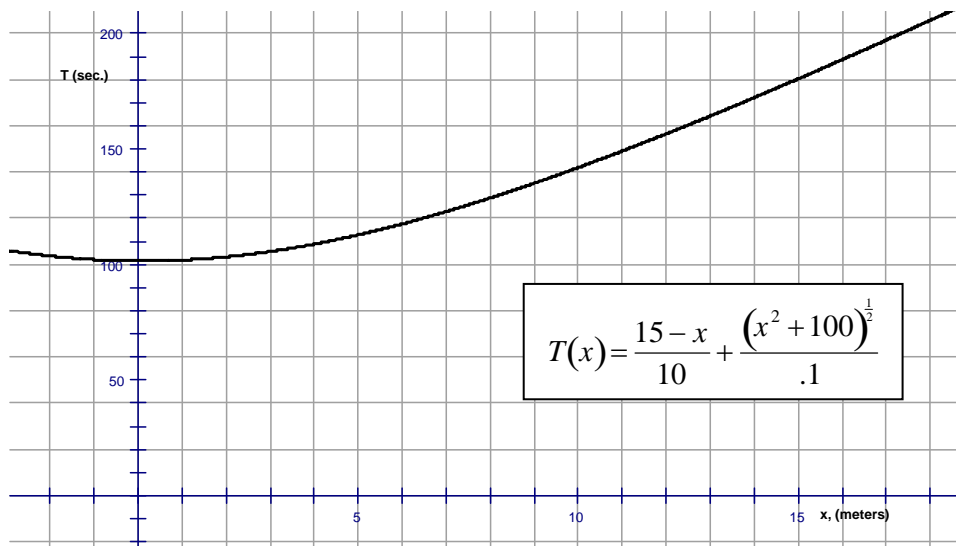
7. Using the graph above, for what value of x is T a minimum? Is this consistent with your physical arguments in part I?

The graph of $T(x)$ is shown for the specific case when Elvis' Running Speed is 5.0 meters per second, and his swimming speed is 5.0 meters per second.



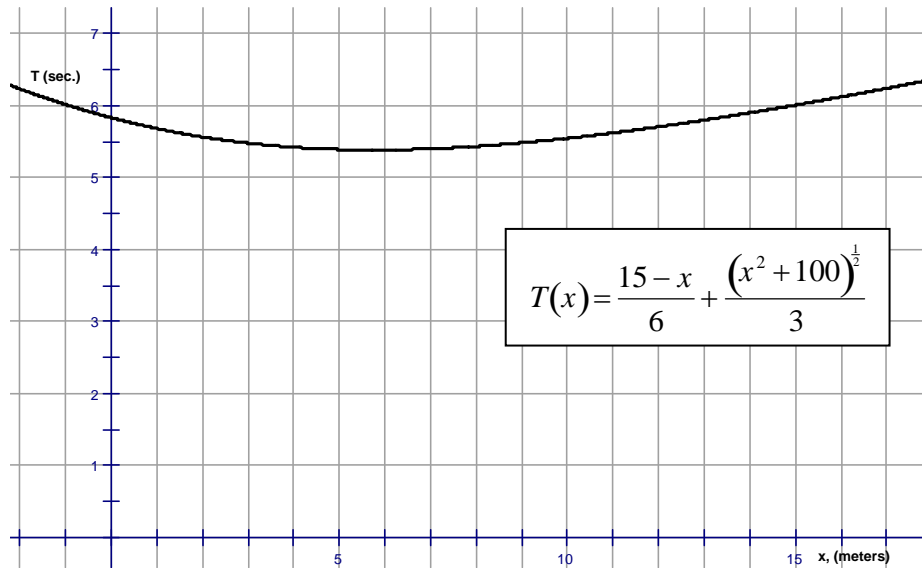
8. Using the graph above, for what value of x is T a minimum? Is this consistent with your physical arguments in part I?

The graph of $T(x)$ is shown for the specific case when Elvis' Running Speed is 10.0 meters per second, and his swimming speed is 0.10 meters per second.



9. Using the graph above, for what value of x is T a minimum? Is this consistent with your physical arguments in part I?

The graph of $T(x)$ is shown for the specific case when Elvis' Running Speed is 6.0 meters per second, and his swimming speed is 3.0 meters per second.



10. Using the graph above, for what value of x is T a minimum?
Is this consistent with your physical arguments in part I?

Part III: The General Case

For the following questions, the running and swimming speeds are not given, but they are considered to be constant. z and y are no longer given.

1. Write a general formula for the time it takes to reach the ball, T , in terms of r , s , x , y , and z .

2. For each individual throw, the following quantities are constant:
The running rate: r
The swimming rate: s
The distance along the shore to the ball: z
The distance in the water to the ball: y

The time to the ball depends only on x ; differentiate the function $T(x)$ with respect to x .

3. Solve for x , when $T'(x) = 0$

7. Examine the last graph in Section II. Is your answer in question 6 consistent with this graph?

PART IV: ELVIS' DATA

By timing several trials, and averaging Elvis' best times, Tim Pennings computed the average of Elvis' best running and swimming times. He then conducted several ball-throwing trials, measuring x and y each time. With a fixed r and s , the minimum time to reach the ball now depends only on how far from shore the ball is thrown (y), and the location where Elvis enters the water (x).

Using Elvis' average running and swimming times:

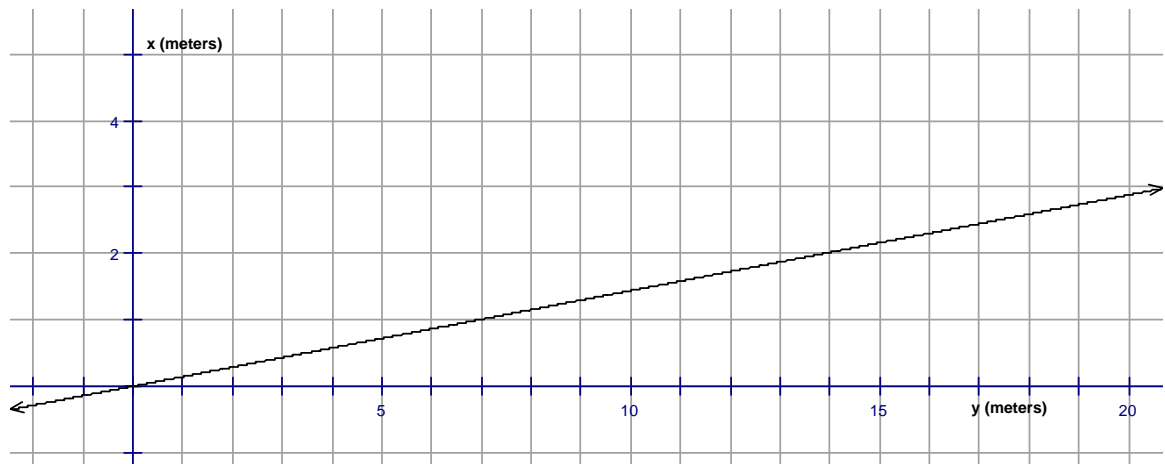
$r = 6.40$ meters per second

$s = 0.91$ meters per second

1. Substitute these quantities in the expression for x when $T'(x) = 0$, to determine the relationship between x and y .

2. For this specific situation where r and s are fixed, how does x depend on y ?

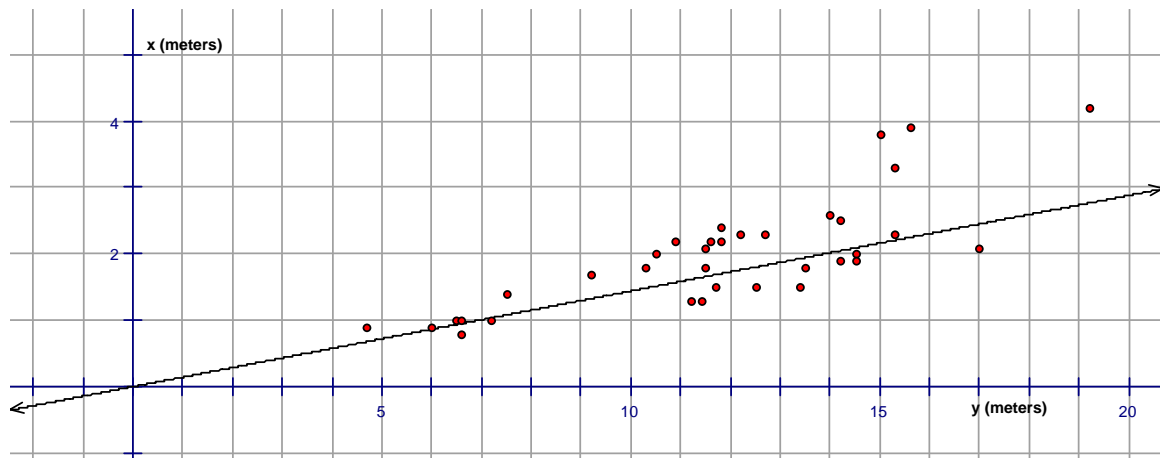
3. The graph of x vs. y is shown on the graph below.



Tim Penning collected the following data, describing where Elvis' entered the water to retrieve the ball for several trials (all distances in meters):

y:	10.5	7.2	10.3	11.7	12.2	19.2	11.4	17.0	15.6	6.6	14.0	13.4
x:	2.0	1.0	1.8	1.5	2.3	4.2	1.3	2.1	3.9	1.0	2.6	1.5
y:	6.5	11.8	4.7	11.6	11.5	9.2	13.5	14.2	14.2	10.9	11.2	15.0
x:	1.0	2.4	0.9	2.2	1.8	1.7	1.8	1.9	2.5	2.2	1.3	3.8
y:	14.5	6.0	14.5	12.5	15.3	11.8	7.5	11.5	12.7	6.6	15.3	
x:	1.9	0.9	2.0	1.5	2.3	2.2	1.4	2.1	2.3	0.8	3.3	

Below is a graph of the data, showing how x depends on y , along with the line from the previous page (representing the optimum x for a given y).



4. Look at the graph above, how does the graph of the data compare with that of the line?

5. Do you feel Elvis does know Calculus; is he jumping in the water at the right value of x so that he minimizes his time to the ball?

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David Gosser, Consulting Editor, gosser@sci.ccny.cuny.edu

AE Dreyfuss, Editor, aedreyfuss@aol.com

Paula Drowniany, Co-Editor, Calculus I Modules
drowniany@math.umaine.edu

Sue McGarry, Co-Editor, Calculus I Modules
mcgarry@math.umaine.edu

Jen Tyne, Co-Editor, Calculus I Modules
tyne@math.umaine.edu

The City College of New York
Marshak Science Building MR-1024
160 Convent Avenue, New York NY 10031
Phone: 212-650-5704 Fax: 212-650-8339

Email: info@pltl.org Website: www.pltl.org

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